

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

THOUGHTS ON MOTHERHOOD

HON. HENRY J. HYDE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 27, 1996

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, last Mother's Day, Terry Gnezda Peckham, the wife of Gardner Peckham, an assistant in the Speaker's office, wrote a beautiful and profound paper entitled "Thoughts on Motherhood."

Her statement is pure literature and I urge my colleagues to take the time to read it carefully. They will be enriched.

THOUGHTS ON MOTHERHOOD—MOTHERS' DAY
1996

(By Terry Gnezda Peckham)

When Father DeSilva asked me to speak today about motherhood, I was very honored to have the chance to share some of my feelings and experiences with you. I'm sure that I am not alone when I think of motherhood as probably the most treasured experience I will ever have. I'm also sure that all of you can remember, as I do, special moments when you have been overcome by the intensity and the beauty of the love you share with your children.

I can vividly remember a beautiful early Summer afternoon two years ago when my daughters were playing in our backyard. School had just ended and the girls seemed so carefree and happy. As I looked out the window that day at my two precious daughters, I thought, life is great! I felt so happy and proud that my husband and I could have given our daughters such a wonderful start in life. They had a nice house in a nice neighborhood, two healthy parents, and a safe, loving, and secure family. On that afternoon I felt so lucky and so overwhelmed with love for my girls, that all the ups and downs of motherhood were replaced with a sense of deep satisfaction and peace. I remember thinking that that was going to be an especially wonderful Summer for us.

Three weeks later, everything had changed when I found myself in the hospital confronting the fact that I was seriously ill. My doctors outlined a plan for several months of horrible and debilitating treatment that would end with extremely serious surgery.

I was terrified—terrified of the treatment, and terrified of what could happen to me if things didn't go as the doctors had planned. I didn't know how I would find the strength to get through it. But, no matter how uncertain my future was at that point, I knew I had to fight this illness—mostly because of my two girls; they were only 4 and 7 at the time, and we still had so much to share.

So, with support from my husband, my family and friends, and with God's help, I was able to find the strength I needed to get through my ordeal.

And, thankfully, things went as my doctors had planned, and I'm here—and I expect to be here for a long, long, time. But this experience, as awful as it was, has led me to a deeper understanding of many things, one of which is motherhood. It has also led me to an unquestionable respect for the power of God's love that flows between mothers and their children.

Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be a mother. I used to love to go to Church on

Sunday morning and watch all the young mothers with their babies. Sometimes I'd even take one of my dolls with me so that I could pretend that I, too, was a young mother. I couldn't imagine anything more wonderful than to have a house full of children. I dreamed about how much fun it would be to watch them all grow, sharing their interests and their dreams and bringing so much love and excitement to life.

I think I played with dolls longer than any of my friends, and I grew up in great anticipation of having children of my own.

Well, motherhood has turned out to be much, much more than I could have ever dreamed. I love being a mother and think it's just about the greatest gift that God has ever given me.

It's awfully hard to put into words what motherhood is really all about. Sometimes it seems too demanding, too tiring, and too overwhelming to cope with, and other times it is incredibly rewarding, very inspiring, and deeply satisfying. Motherhood pushes us to our limits, physically, emotionally, and often intellectually, as we and our children experience life together.

Through motherhood, we face every possible emotion with an intensity that is unparalleled in other aspects of life. When our children are happy, we are overjoyed, and when they're sad we ache inside, often because we feel powerless to take away the pain. This intensity of feeling brings such pride (the kind that makes you well-up inside with tears), it keeps us focused on our responsibilities, and leads us to so much uncertainty (and sometimes guilt) as we wonder if we're doing the right thing as we bring-up our children.

For—here is this person who needs parents for everything—for protection, for love, and for guidance—guidance to learn about the world, to learn about other people, to learn how to behave, and to learn about himself or herself.

And here we are, with our husbands, responsible for teaching this person all the things that we think are most important to provide a sound foundation to guide our child's life.

One of the most remarkable things that happens as a result of motherhood is that we learn a great deal about ourselves. It is through motherhood that we come closer to an understanding of who we are, and therefore, what God has given us to share with our children. In fact, I think motherhood brings us into the most intimate relationships that we will ever have with other human beings. And at the heart of this intimacy is honesty and love.

It's not hard to be honest with our children about what we think, feel, or believe, because most of the time it seems that they can see right through us, or at least they sense when something doesn't seem right. And it's a remarkable thing to be honest with our children about who we are, because it gives us the freedom to enjoy life with them in a wonderful way.

With our children, together, we realize that it's O.K. to be spontaneous or silly sometimes. It's good to have fun and laugh. It's also very important to cuddle and hug the people we love, and to trust that there is someone who accepts us as we are, loves us without question, and is always there.

But children must also learn that sometimes it's important to be serious, it's nor-

mal to be mad or sad, or disappointed, and fear and unhappiness are part of life, too.

And as we teach our children all of these realities of life, we must also show them the value of having a deep and enduring faith in God. For it is through God's love and his presence in all of us that we are able to celebrate our joys and endure our pain. With this knowledge, children can trust that they are never alone and that God will help them get through anything that life brings.

Together, the intimate relationships with parents, and an enduring faith in God help children to grow into people who accept themselves and others, and feel compassion toward all humanity.

So, motherhood is a monumental responsibility, but it is full of love, joy, and countless rewards. In fact, it is God's most important work.

And, even though I still dread making brown bag lunches for school every day, dislike the struggle over homework every night, and tire of reminding my girls to brush their teeth before they go to bed, I wouldn't trade those moments for anything, because they're part of it all.

And it's when they play together for hours on end singing so happily, or read to each other, cuddling closely on the sofa, or when they marvel at the shapes of the clouds or the colors of the sky—or even when they sit up in the middle of the night, fold their hands and pray that they won't have any more nightmares—that's when motherhood really feels worthwhile. Or, when we get all those hugs that come out nowhere, or when they look up at us with such trust and love, or when they want to share every last detail of their day, that's also when motherhood feels worthwhile.

My girls are still in primary and elementary school, so I know we've got a long way to go together, but I have faith that the love we have for each other will get us through whatever the future brings, and I know that God will be there to help us.

And so, even though my girls are a little older now, I often wonder if when they were babies and I took them to Church on Sunday mornings, if maybe, just maybe, there was a little girl who dreamed, as I had so many years ago, about how wonderful it will be to be a mommy. To that little girl and all the other little girls here today, I hope you will keep dreaming, and that someday you, too, will be blessed with the gift of motherhood.

SUPPORT FOR SCHOLARSHIPS THROUGH PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

HON. ED BRYANT

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 27, 1996

Mr. BRYANT of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, today Mr. CLEMENT and I introduced a bill to help private foundations with educational scholarship programs. We should be encouraging greater partnerships between private groups, local communities, and aspiring students, but current IRS rules sometimes skew the roads to that goal.

Under current law, a private foundation formed primarily to provide scholarships or

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